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Feb 13, 1994

Notes on Markusen, Chapters 4,

[Thoughts on nuclear deterrence:

--With a very few exceptions--nuclear explosions at sea, in space, in deserts--all attacks with nuclear weapons are genocidal massacres, and most cases (including the exceptions above) are likely to escalate quickly, if they are not from the onset, clear-cut genocide. ^{to}

--Thus, ~~thus~~ threats and readiness to attack with nuclear weapons--including the general posture of deterrence and the very possession of nuclear weapons--are threats and readiness to commit genocide: very large-scale, state-directed mass murder. ^(MURDER)

(What if the "collateral" civilian casualties are truly undesired: i.e., they would be avoided if it were possible to hit the military targets (or industrial targets?) without killing them? This would still be negligent homicide or even murder, but would it be genocide: since the humans would not be targeted "as such"?)

^{COLLATERAL GENOCIDE}

--There can be no question that such threats and readiness are evil. Thus, they are forbidden and culpable under nearly all circumstances. But the question remains whether under some real--historical or current--circumstances, they may constitute a lesser evil, an evil that is necessary to avert an (otherwise sure, imminent?) greater evil or damage. ^{intention to but the}

--The judgement that this may have been true--or reasonably appeared true (which is not quite the same thng)--in the past does not prove, at all, that it is true under current circumstance. But it does suggest that it could again be true, or appear true, in the future, and it means that it likely to appear to be true even now to many people. Argument that deterrence has never been and could never be justified*--which ignores the past cases in rejecting the possibility of future justification--may appear, at best, unrealistic and misleading, if not insulting to the awareness of the many who regard it as having been unequivocally justified in the past, despite its evil nature.

--However, a closer look at the past circumstances indicates that the judgment that deterrence was necessary to avert a greater evil, and therefore justified, reflected, over and over again, fears of adversarial threats that did not, in fact, exist or eventuate. Thus the deterrence was not, after all, "necessary" (nor can it plausibly be said to have actually prevented the threats from occurring). The fear, and thus the response, may have been "reasonable," but the historical pattern, in the light of the ^{thus, it may be justified}

* Is this (accompanied by) a proposal for unilateral total impotence
we disavow, or not? If not, why not?

^{without (really) having been necessary}

very expensive and dangerous responses, suggests much greater skepticism about the perceived need for deterrence, and concern that the response to this need may make these exaggerated fears self-fulfilling, eventually creating a genuine danger.

Thus:

- deterrence in the Pacific before Pearl Harbor
- the race to the bomb with Hitler
- the bomber gap
- the missile gap
- missed opportunities with Khrushchev *esp. after Sept. 61*
- possible test ban before H-bomb
- missed opportunities with Malenkov
- missed opportunities with Gorbachev
- MIRV (Brezhnev)

--In any case, a careful look at immediate realities suggests strongly that there is no case for the necessity of deterrence at this time, and that the next period might well be spent in exploring ways to assure that the need does not arise in the future, and building that assurance, i.e., providing non-evil alternatives to deterrence.

--The goal: an end to state-sponsored massacre of all kinds, and to war. Neither nuclear weapons nor the danger of nuclear attacks will be eliminated without these; nor will these be eliminated while nuclear threats continue to be legitimated.

Just as (Fuller, Chapter 2, p. 8) it is difficult "...for a conscripted nation--that is, a nation in arms--a nation fed on violent propaganda, to make an enduring peace" (i.e., "to end the war on a basis that would promote a lasting peace") so it is difficult to build enduring peace when images of adversaries and potential adversaries are promoted which rationalise a readiness to commit mass murder--as the only way to discourage them from murdering us.

This is the point of Einstein's "You cannot simultaneously avoid (end?) war and prepare for war"; you cannot simultaneously work to end war while preparing for and anticipating mass murder. And Dad's point: To prepare for and threaten nuclear war is--especially in the light of the possibility of nuclear winter--to teach a lesson to ourselves, our children and the world, that is